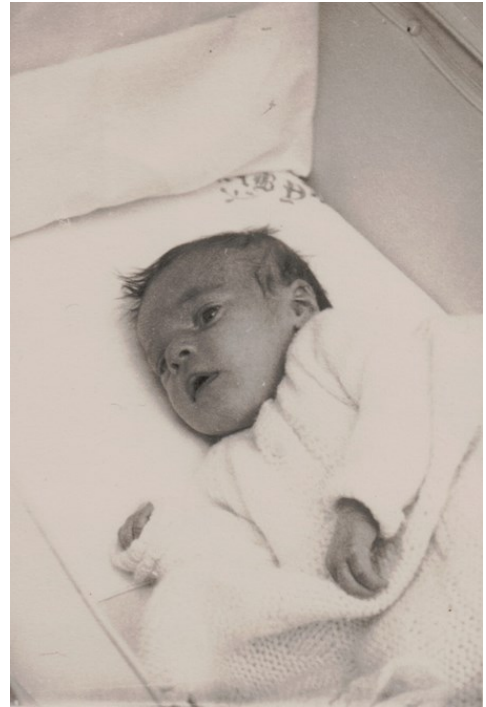


28 Sundridge Road

I was born at 28 Sundridge Road, Addiscombe, Croydon, Surrey, a typical, three bed, late Victorian terrace that my parents had purchased for £2050 in 1954. Prior to this they had spent six years renting the upper floor of 65 Mallinson Road, Wandsworth. I believe that there they had one living room and one bedroom, used a cooker on the landing and shared a bathroom.

28 had a small front garden, memorable for its purple campanula. A narrow corridor hall gave way to a living room at the front, on the left of the front door and a dining room behind. At the end of the hall was a galley kitchen. The stairs went up straight from just to the right of the front door. Upstairs was a bathroom and I think a separate toilet although these are the only rooms that I cannot visualise. There were two large bedrooms and a small box room over the front door.

The back garden was fairly small with an alleyway at the bottom, providing access and allowing us to put the metal dustbin out each week. There was a crazy paving path down the length of the garden, a lawn, an apple tree, a shed at the end and flower beds round the edge. I remember cottage garden plants: red hot pokers, alyssum, London pride,



6 Weeks Old



3 June 1958

forget-me-nots, nasturtiums, windflowers (Japanese anemones), honeysuckle, Michaelmas daisies, lupins, rudbeckia and antirrhinums. I used to play with the seed pods of these, thinking they looked like rabbits. My favourite plant was the asparagus fern and this was one of the things that I most regretted leaving behind when we moved. I can remember that, when I was still mastering the art of walking, I would stand on dad's feet, holding his hands and he would walk me down the garden path; an activity that we called 'dumpy-dump'.



December 1962



'Dumpy-dump' 23 August 1957



**With the Asparagus Fern
Leaving Sundridge Road
August 1963**

My beloved swing was at the bottom of the garden. This was a fourth birthday present and was a successor to a home-made swing, that hung from the tree. I can remember playing in the snow in the garden and raking up leaves in autumn. We had a wooden panelling



The Original Swing 18 July 1958



The New Swing April 1960

fence. The knot-holes in this were a serious problem. I had been given a doll made from an early rubberised soft plastic by my Uncle Len for my first Christmas. I was playing with 'Betty' in my cot when her head got stuck through the bars. I pulled vigorously and was left holding Betty's body whilst her head rolled on the floor. The gaping hole in her neck meant that I developed a phobia about holes, one which still occasionally lingers. This meant that any knot-holes in the fence had to be swiftly stopped. This was an era when birthday and



**Playing with the Fridge Box
September 1959**

Christmas cards often had holes in the front, revealing further pictures beneath. Mum had to open all incoming cards, cover the holes with paper and reseal them in their envelopes before I opened them.

There are pictures of me, aged about fifteen months, sat in the kitchen in my pram pulling newspapers from where they were stored under the sink. I was three when we acquired our first 'Frigidaire' fridge. I know I

played in the box it came in for days. I recall the cream 'New World' gas cooker in the kitchen, the ceiling mounted clothes-airer that was let down on a pulley and the Ascot geyser that supplied hot water but little else in the kitchen comes to mind apart from the small high window to the left of the back door. When I was less than two, I saw a small child at this window, someone that I described as an angel. I don't know how to rationalise this 'vision'. On several subsequent occasions, until I was a teenager, I 'saw' a girl who seemed to always be my age. My mother, grandmother and great aunt Ella were similarly sensitive. According to her asylum records, my great great aunt Fanny heard voices, was this a manifestation of something comparable? We always said that the girl I saw was Peggy, a daughter of Auntie Ella's who had died at three months old.

The living room really was lived in and not saved for best as Auntie Ella's was. We had a dark brown three-piece suite with gold piping round the edge and an arm chair with metal arms. I clearly remember the upholstery on that chair; small greenish rectangles with black and red touches, although I think that it spent much of its life in the dining room. Mum must have covered this chair herself as we had curtains to match. Photographs show that there was a whole suite covered in this material. Perhaps that lived in the dining room whilst the brown suite was in the living room. The curtains were later turned into a pair of trousers for me when I was about sixteen. The pattern was deemed to be suitably 'hippified'. I think it was behind this chair that I retreated when I was hiding from my paternal grandfather who we didn't see very often and who scared me a bit. Whilst I was there, I decided to empty out the solid contents of my nappy on to the floor. We had a standard lamp in the living



**The Patterned Arm Chair
1957**

room. It had a black painted wooden stem and a pink silk shade with fringing. When I got taller, I would stand next to the stem and run my hands round the fringe so that I ended up cuddling the stem.



The Living Room 5 August 1962

Having said that we 'lived' in the living room, most of my memories are of the dining room. I do however remember sitting on the living room settee, which faced the fireplace and making cardboard models with granny. One was of a dolls' house and the other, less interestingly, was a cardboard pram. Somehow I had acquired two of the prams - I suspect both mum and granny had bought me one for what was probably my sixth birthday. I vividly remember holding out my fingers ready for the next bit of sellotape to be cut for me, so that I could assemble these models. I also recall a birthday party in the living room. The Saturday nearest to my birthday was frequently University Boat Race day and I can remember watching the Boat Race during the party. I always supported Oxford, primarily because I preferred dark blue to its wishy-washy pale Cambridge alternative.

There were fireplaces in each of the four main rooms but the fire was normally reserved for the living room. We used to make spills¹ from cards, which were used to light cigarettes from the fire; both my parents were smokers at this time. I believe a gas fire had been installed in the tiled fireplace in the dining room. The bedroom fireplaces were blocked up. Leaving the fire to go to bed in winter was always an effort, although we might have an electric fire on in the bedroom for an hour to try to

1. Thin cardboard strips.

make it warmer. These fan heaters were tiny and seldom up to the job. We also had a dark brown, tube-shaped, electrical heater. Auntie Ella and probably my grandparents, had cylindrical paraffin heaters. I can remember mum putting my clothes for the day in my bed so that I could dress under the covers when it was very cold and we might have 'Jack Frost' patterns on the windows in winter. Although we had a bathroom, I can recall being bathed and more particularly having my hair washed, which I hated, in the tin bath in front of the fire because it was warmer. Despite judicious use of a protective flannel, hair washing always seemed to involve getting water and shampoo in my eyes.

We had a television when I was born; my parents had purchased it in order to watch the Coronation in 1953. Later it was in the living room but initially it was in the dining room. At 15 months I was still sitting in my large, Silver Cross pram watching the tiny, flickering black and white screen which was showing what I later knew to be Wimbledon. I actually remember this, rather than being told about it. The dining room was a favourite room for me. It had the most wonderful carpet, small dark and lighter green patches with tiny white splodges that looked like daisies on grass. This carpet followed us from home to home, gradually having to be used for smaller and smaller rooms. In my first home it was used in the third bedroom, which became my elder daughter's nursery. It then became a dolls' house carpet and I still have a piece that I can't bear to get rid of. If I could find a modern copy of this carpet I would buy it. It was magical for a small child to be able to play on the 'grass' whenever she liked. Pictures show that this carpet must only have been put down in the year before we moved out but I am sure it started life in this house.

In the back, right-hand corner of the dining room was a space, about three foot square, that had been a larder. For some reason my parents took the door off and incorporated this into the dining room. To be honest, it left a pretty useless small square space but I still remember the sun streaming in through the high up window. There

used to be a coffee table in the space. This was one of two or three made by my father from squares of wood, which were backed onto an inferior wood and given screw-on legs. I still have the four square one, that inhabited the former larder, in use in my living room. The larger, six square one was great for playing games on, as each square could be a different room. I used this for Sindy dolls but my daughters and grandchildren used the four square one for Playmobil rooms.

Also in the dining room was a sideboard, two large cupboards that flanked a centre section, which had three shallow drawers and a portion behind the drawers that was accessed by a flip up 'lid'. There was an element of a secret part to this, as when the lid was raised it revealed a shallow divided drawer that had to be lifted to expose the storage area at the back. I seem to remember that mum kept knitting wool in the back section. On one occasion, when I was about three, my father had been left in charge. The only type of eggs I would eat were poached but dad decided that he would give me fried egg to see what happened. When he turned his back, I hid the fried egg in the divided drawer at the back of the sideboard. My other memories of the dining room include an incident when I was two or three. I believe we had visitors, probably my paternal grandparents, uncles and aunt. As I went out of the door it came off its risers and I was left holding a solid oak door. Fortunately, I was tall for my age and it did not overbalance, as it required some effort to attract attention and convince the adults that I was in trouble! Dad made wooden door stops, one shaped like a bottle and the other like a house. He would make the chimney smoke by putting a cigarette in it.

The dining room was also where mum and I spent time when dad was working in the evening. There was a table at which we would draw. Each sheet of paper was given a border. We would decorate the borders and then swap sheets and fill in the middles with our creations.

The black, bakelite telephone was also in the dining room; our number was ADD1518. This was kept on a built-in cupboard in the alcove to the left of the fireplace. There was a rug in the dining room, made by my mum, that had a pattern of different sized



A Drawing c. 1960

I seem to have been responsible for both border and inside of this one

coloured squares, outlined in black. These were great for games such as farms or zoos, where each square could be a field. Mum and granny made lots of rugs. Granny had a half-moon one of a cottage garden. This passed to me and survived several machine washes before the brown wool ran and bits started to pull out and I very reluctantly parted with it early in the 2000s. I wish now that I had photographed it first.

My parents' bedroom contained the 'utility' suite that they had when they married. There was a large and small wardrobe and a dressing table but not I think a chest of drawers. These wardrobes survived in my spare bedroom until I left the Isle of Wight in 2006. Mum had a pink 'carnival' glass dressing table set. I can picture this, in particular, on a day when we discovered that I had grown tall enough to no longer fit comfortably under her arm; this was probably in our subsequent house. Fitted carpets were a luxury and came in for us in the mid-sixties. Before this, a square of carpet would be put on a lino-covered floor. This meant that you always had to cross the cold lino round the edge of the room in order to get out of the door.

I alternated between the large back bedroom and the small box room.

I think there may have been an airing cupboard in the small bedroom on the left hand side of the door, behind the head of the bed and possibly a chest of drawers in the right hand corner under the window but I don't think there was a wardrobe, or indeed room for one. I believe there was a bookcase at the foot of the bed. As I lay in bed there was a metal 'cuckoo' clock on the wall facing me. It didn't actually go 'cuckoo' but it was a similar style with weights and chains. I think that this was a birthday present that we assembled ourselves. Despite having many memories of being very small, apart from the Betty incident, I don't remember my cot. We did later take a side off and convert it into a garden seat. My two foot six bed lasted fifty years with replacement mattresses and became my younger daughter's bed and later a spare bed. Like many other pieces of furniture, it left the family, in this case by being dismantled and disposed of, when I downsized in 2006. My parents had made the headboard out of a piece of chip board covered in fablon or 'contact' This sticky-backed plastic came in a variety of patterns and was much used in the early 1960s, often to revitalise a piece of furniture. The contact on the headboard was white with raised diamond shapes, designed to resemble a padded, quilted headboard. I was continually counting the diamonds to establish which was the centre panel. In the end I drew round this diamond in pencil. I immediately regretted this action, thinking that it might get me in trouble. I did try to rub the pencil off both with spit and a finger and a rubber but it never quite went away.

As a very small child I had a pink blanket that had been crocheted by my mum or granny, It had different coloured stripes round the edge; I still have this. Later I had a pale blue, shop-bought blanket and a white one with pink, yellow and blue stripes on the edge. These too lasted fifty years. White sheets gave way to the ever-popular candy stripes - narrow stripes in pastel colours: pink, purple, blue, green and yellow, with a white stripe between each. Sheets were cotton in summer and winceyette in winter. I also had a candlewick bedspread. Candlewick meant that the cover had tufts of thread, like candle-

wicks, pushed up through the material, either in rows or to form a swirly pattern.

My main memory of the box bedroom room is of my mum sitting on the bed telling me that yet another relative had died. This happened frequently in the early 1960s and it was the only time she ever sat on my bed, so I always knew what was coming. Strangely, I always seemed to be in the little bedroom on these occasions, perhaps because it was winter. The death of my maternal grandmother, with whom I was very close, was the most memorable. She had come to live with us when her lung cancer became acute. In fact, she died in our home but initially, I was told that she had been taken into hospital. I suppose mum thought that I might be upset to think she had died in the house. It was several days afterwards that she told me that granny had died. I was reading a comic at the time - *Diana* I think; it was three weeks past my seventh birthday.

The back bedroom illustrated my mum's decorative flair. The ceiling was divided into a dozen or so panels. Mum painted each one a different pastel colour. I remember looking at these as I went to sleep. The bed was usually in the back right-hand corner. Clothes were kept in a large 'three drawers with two over' oak chest that mum had covered with 'contact' depicting Noddy characters. I kept my toys in an impressive oak chest which boasted a candle box, I believe that it had come from my Uncle Percy and had probably belonged to his mother, my great grandmother, before this. I loved this piece of furniture. In our next house it was kept in the hall. When my dad died, the undertaker put a floral tribute on it and from then on, mum could only see this chest as a coffin. Its sojourn in our household was short-lived after this. I also had a tall, wooden bookcase painted in pale blue. For the first five years of my life my dad painted an annual portrait of my favourite toys of the previous year. I don't remember if these were put on my bedroom wall but I feel that they must have been.

The boarded-up fireplace in this back bedroom provided another early childhood memory. It was the day of Princess Margaret's wedding, 6th May 1960 and I think we had watched this on television. At the time I was suffering from a boil on my bottom. This is not relevant to the story but the three things are forever connected in my memory. I went to bed when it was still daylight and a bird fell down the chimney. Ever an animal lover, mum broke through the hardboard to free the bird.

Mum tried to keep our homes up to date and decorating was an exciting activity, undertaken by the whole family. As a toddler, I had great fun stripping off the bits of wallpaper that I could reach. Then came the even better fun of drawing and writing on the wall, leaving messages for future owners, before the wallpaper was replaced. Mum's decorating palette was always autumnal, so rooms tended towards shades of green, yellow and brown, colour schemes that have continued into my homes. Rarely were pink or blue seen in our houses.

Another thing that I remember was the nightly ritual, when every plug, apart from the fridge, had to be removed from its socket, the open fire banked-up and guarded and all windows and doors checked.